

STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES

Economic Services Administration P.O. Box 45070, Olympia, Washington 98504-5070

September 27, 2004

TO:

All Employees, Community Services Division

All Employees, Division of Employment and Assistance Programs

Regional Administrators, Community Services Division

ESA Directors

FROM:

Deb Bingaman, Assistant Secretary Economic Services Administration

SUBJECT:

SERVING TWO-PARENT TANF FAMILIES

Since the start of WorkFirst in 1997, we have been very successful and effective in helping WorkFirst families get and keep a job, and providing them with the vital supports they need to succeed in the workforce. We have been able to achieve this despite a struggling economy and budget reductions.

I am writing to you today about a challenge facing WorkFirst, and to ask for your help in increasing opportunities for two-parent families who receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

Our goal is to ensure that adults in these families are connected as quickly as possible to the services and supports that meet their needs and promote economic self-sufficiency within current WorkFirst policy.

Increasing the Level of Participation by Two-Parent Families

The number of two-parent families on TANF in Washington state represents about 10 percent of our total TANF caseload (about 5,400 two-parent families, compared to a total caseload of 54,000 families).

Of the adults in two-parent families who are not exempt, only about one-third of them are actively participating in WorkFirst.

At this level, the state is at risk of not meeting federal performance expectations for this population. Because of this, intensifying services and increasing participation by two-parent families is now a priority. These cases must be managed to ensure that the parents are participating as much as possible in WorkFirst activities that are appropriate and effective, given their unique needs and abilities.

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While these families may present different challenges than single parents, it is just as important to mobilize all the WorkFirst services and resources available to aid two-parent families toward achieving self-sufficiency.

Please begin or continue to focus on the following activities.

- Share information about local best practices for effectively working with two-parent families, including the option of assigning two-parent cases to one worker or contractor for services.
- Review all parents in "No Activity" status (these are adults with no component or an expired component) and take steps to engage these parents in appropriate activities within current WorkFirst policy.
- Reinforce current policy that requires social workers to make home visits to people in sanction for four or more months to encourage participation. For more details, see the <u>Sanction Step-by-Step Guide</u> in the WorkFirst Handbook at (http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/ESA/wfhand/tools_sanction.htm)
- Ensure the integrity of all information entered into *eJAS*, including the correct time block coding of activity hours.

In addition, all cases with Z codes need to be reviewed to ensure that adults in exempt status are appropriately coded in *eJAS*. These include: adults with a disability (ZD), adults age 55 and older (ZA), adults caring for an adult with a disability (ZB), and adults caring for a child with special needs (ZC). If any of these adults are participating in a WorkFirst activity (e.g., SSI facilitation for a person with a long-term disability), they are to be placed in an X component and an Individual Responsibility Plan should reflect this.

Further guidance with additional information on this Z code review will be issued soon by the Division of Employment and Assistance Programs.

Case reviews are to done in this priority order: adults in two-parent family cases followed by adults in single-parent family cases.

To assist our local offices in this effort, I've asked headquarters staff to prepare an ad hoc BarCode report that regions and local offices can use to identify the following individuals in two-parent families:

- Adults with no open component
- Adults with one or more expired components
- Adults with components expiring within 14 days
- Adults in a Z component

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Attached are instructions on how to access this report. This report will help us monitor our performance and progress in these areas, both statewide and at the local level.

Offices can get this information on single-parent cases through *eJAS* ad hoc reporting as well as these *eJAS* reports: Caseload Management Report and the Daily Customer Accountability Report.

If you have any questions regarding these reports, please contact Brent Low of the Division of Employment and Assistance Programs, at (360) 725-4633 or lowbd@dshs.wa.gov.

It is vital that adults in two-parent families be as fully engaged as possible in activities that are appropriate for them. This will help the families move toward self-sufficiency, and help Washington state meet our obligations under federal law. I appreciate your attention to this important issue.

Thank you for all the important work you do to support the struggling parents who turn to us for help.

Attachment

CC:

Ken Miller Robin Zukoski Gary Gallwas Sandy Miller Jim Crabbe Marijo Olson